



KNOW YOUR EASL MEMBERS

By: Joe L. Herring

BY: JODIE SINGER

Who knew that Indiana Jones could have some adventuresome competition, and that it would come from a local Louisianan from Ruston. But that's what comes to mind after having a chat with Joe L. Herring, who readily admits, "The Good Lord has been with me," as he describes the many facets of his life. One thing is certain. You wouldn't call it boring.

Joe says that from an early age, he knew he wanted to work with wildlife. As a youngster he worked several before and after school jobs including delivering circulars and groceries for a Shreveport grocer, delivering papers for the Shreveport Times and Shreveport Journal, bottling and delivering milk for Jersey Gold Creamers, and working his

way to baker for Holsum Bakery. With the money he earned, Joe raised Bantam chickens, Racing Homers (pigeons) which he actually raced, rabbits and other animals. Interestingly, because of their speed, endurance and enhanced homing instinct, some of Joe's Homers were used for carrying messages in World War II. How cool is that! And Joe says all of his birds were granted discharges from the Army. Joe also had some Rollers, a breed of pigeon that would, while flying, go into a spiraling tailspin when they heard a clap. Certainly not useful to the Army, but a lot of fun to watch.

Joe attended Fair Park High School in Shreveport, where he was active in track, 4-H, tennis, baseball and boxing, among other things. He says he got interested in boxing because there were three

bullies at his school who gave him some trouble. Let's just say the bullying came to an abrupt end some time after that. Also, Joe was involved in ROTC and was a member of the National Championship Intercollegiate Rifle Team, impressively beating Army, Navy, Marines, and every other team they shot against.

After high school, Joe attended Louisiana Polytechnic Institute (now Louisiana Tech) where he earned a B.S. in Wildlife Management in 1949. While at La. Tech, Joe worked several odd jobs to pay for college including lab assistant, photography and shoe repair, and served for three years in the National Guard. He also worked for Glen Shadows Farm planting trees, and working with deer, bison and other wildlife, and trapped his first deer there for LDWF in 1946. La. Tech is also where he met Rosalie Haggard who, after waiting a year after graduation at the request of Rosalie's father, became Joe's wife. They celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary on October 6! Congratulations!

Joe did post graduate work at Centenary College, Jacksonville State University, and Auburn University. He continued graduate study at Northwestern State University and LSU.

Joe says he had offers from Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama after graduating from La. Tech. He chose Alabama because he could begin work immediately and really looked forward to one paycheck. Joe worked as a Farm Game Research Leader with an emphasis on quail. He continued his work in Alabama until 1952.

Later, when Joe's name popped up as a recruit with wildlife experience, Joe's quick answer was "yes" when asked if he was interested in starting a wildlife program at Fort Sill Oklahoma. Joe had gotten a draft notice during the Korean Conflict, but his boss told him he could get it deferred because of the project he was working on. Joe declined, and is of the opinion that "all men should serve in the Army." He did not tell Rosalie about this until about 15 years ago when they were going home from church. She was telling him how proud she was of his service, and he was so touched that he told her he could have gotten out of it, but didn't think he should be an exception. That is the character of Joe L. Herring in a nutshell. Joe spent two years doing wildlife work at Fort Sill as a Fisheries and Wildlife Biologist. He served six years in the US Army Reserves before being honorably discharged.

In 1954, Joe and Rosalie returned to Alabama with Joe taking a position as a district biologist supervisor. They supplemented their income by snake hunting. That's right, snake hunting! Rosalie would drive through the hills with Joe sitting outside on the fender. When he'd see a snake sunning on the rocks, Joe would bang his hand on the hood. Rosalie would stop to let Joe catch the snake. The snakes were sold to Ross Allen's Reptile Institute in Florida. The institute paid 50¢ per foot for non-poisonous and \$1 per foot for poisonous snakes. And you got a bonus if the snake was over 5 feet. Ha! Even Indiana Jones wouldn't do that. He hated snakes, remember?

After a year or so, Joe and Rosalie decided to move back to Louisiana. Joe was employed by LDWF to start a farm game research project, was serving as a district supervisor a short time later, and was promoted to education supervisor by 1960. Joe continued to work his way up the ladder at LDWF, eventually retiring in 1988 after serving as Assistant Secretary, Office of Wildlife. But his retirement didn't last long. Joe was appointed Secretary of the LDWF in 1991 and served in that capacity until 1995. When Joe took over as Secretary, the LDWF had a \$1 million

deficit, and with only 6 months to do something about it, Joe was advised to lay off 37 employees. Joe flat refused. Putting politics and popularity aside and using common sense cost cutting strategies, Joe saved those 37 jobs and brought the budget into a manageable balance. There's that character of his again. He says he is very proud of his career, and happy to have worked for LDWF. "For years it was like a family," says Joe. "I reckon that is why I still visit the Department."

Joe has a lot to be proud of, and to list them all would take up this whole newspaper. So, I'll touch on some of the highlights. Joe started the Hunter Safety Program, successfully fighting the naysayers who thought parents should be responsible for that, not the government. Joe served as state chairman of National Wildlife Week for 25 years. He and Bob Dennie were responsible for starting National Hunting and Fishing Day in Baton Rouge. Joe says they made sure to get the ok from V.J. Bourque, Jr. since EASL had been putting on their own NHFD program. Joe was instrumental in saving the Louisiana Natural Heritage Program within the LDWF.

When President Nixon was in office,

he was setting up "mini white houses" in the federal districts around the US. By presidential order, Nixon was transferring Louisiana's federal aid programs (Dingell-Johnson & Pittman-Robertson) from Atlanta to Albuquerque, essentially putting Louisiana into a desert region (insert head scratching here). Long story short, files were transferred to Albuquerque, then turned around and shipped back to Atlanta. The regional directors were dumbfounded that the score was President Nixon-0, Joe L. Herring-1. Once again, Joe's common sense and determination to do what's best for the wildlife of Louisiana prevailed.

Another noteworthy achievement on Joe's impressive résumé was his appointment to serve on the USDA's McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Research Advisory Committee. This committee determines which forestry schools in the US would receive research funds. "Naturally, this was a help to LSU and La. Tech," Joe says. The makeup is mostly forestry professors and industry foresters, with only one wildlife biologist serving on this committee. Of all the wildlife biologists and professors, Joe was asked to serve and represent wildlife, which he did for 3 years. "A real honor," he

says.

And as a finale to his work with LDWF, Joe's design and vision of a foundation created to support and enhance the LDWF became a reality in December 1995. The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation, Joe's creation, is a nonprofit 501(c)3 with a mission to promote LDWF and encourage public conservation and enjoyment of natural resources. Since its creation, the Foundation has aided several programs including youth hunter education, wood duck conservation projects, WMA improvements, and numerous fishing and hunting workshops and programs. Where Indiana Jones works to preserve archeological artifacts, our own Louisiana Joe works to preserve our wildlife. See what I did there? Clever, huh.

And now we come to the point where we congratulate Joe for his many years of service on the EASL board - 29 consecutive years to be exact. Outstanding work, and if anyone deserves a break, it's you. I hope you and Rosalie get to spend a whole lot more time with your daughters, Sandy Kleinpeter and Jan Peterson, and the nine grandchildren. I'm sure they are as proud of you as are we, your EASL family. Our best to you and Rosalie.